

CO-OPERATIVE SUCCESS IN HORSHAM AREA

The settlement at Quantong which is devoted to fruit growing and vegetable production, is a happy one in which the growers' goods and supplies are mostly disposed of through the one avenue of their own controlling office. The genesis of the present position was created by one man, Mr. Conrad Jost, who held a fruit block in the area and some years ago sold it.

Approached by the other holders to sell their produce, Mr. Jost accepted, and, contributing £2-10-0 each, they erected him an office in the Station yard at Quantong. A few members paid £5-0-0. This was the start of the Quantong Fruitgrowers Co-operative.

Each man's produce is sold by Mr. Jost as manager. The market price for goods sold is credited and paid to the grower. By keen business, good sales, few bad debts (£200 is deemed sufficient to cover this item, and it is to be noted that amounts written off as bad debts in one year have been recoverable in the following year's report). The manager and office staff are paid salaries and all profits at the end of the year are divided amongst the growers on a pro rata sales basis.

The area of the settlement is approximately 1,600 acres, and prior to closer settlement and irrigation, it produced 8 bales of wool which, say, may have sold for £160. Today there are 50 families living in the area, about 300 people in all. Figures this year were: 147,000 packages of fruit and vegetables sold to the value of £43,000. The amount of profit on sales unallotted over and above the market value of the goods was £5,350, and this was handed out on a pro rata basis to each grower at the Annual Meeting which is always held on the first Friday in November of each year.

To provide WORKING CAPITAL, Mr. Jost suggested, and the members agreed, that the profits on sales for the 1st. and 2nd years should be held back and credited to each member's account. The figure standing to the credit of growers today is £2,700.

One of the features of the settlement which is vital is that a man with no money, who is prepared to work, can always get a job.

He works for a grower for from four to five years until thoroughly conversant with the business, and then:

- (1) He is allotted to work some land growing vegetables.
- (2) Certain amounts of money from vegetable sales are deducted each year.
- (3) These monies are credited against the worker's purchase of the land.

So through the stages he acquires all he needs to plant the land, obtain his plants and ultimately own it. During all these stages he is nursed and nurtured by the office, the only factor required of the man is that he must work. He cannot fail if he does that, because this body of co-operative men working this area would not allow any member to fall by the wayside.

As Mr. Jost says, "We haven't got anything but what two factors will give us:

- (1) Commonsense in business; and (2) hard work."

The managerial and administrative costs are only 4% approx. of the total sales money.

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